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ABSTRACT

Suggestions for aiding State and local organizations in developing programs for aiding the handicapped in rural areas are presented. It is pointed out that the greatest problem of handicapped people is community apathy in regard to helping them. The key public resource in every State is the State vocational rehabilitation agency. The first action on the State level should come from the Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped and should consist of forming a State Rural Areas Committee for the Handicapped. On a local basis, the first step is to designate a local organization to give administrative leadership to developing work with the handicapped locally. Work with the handicapped in rural areas is a three-fold, interrelated responsibility. It involves establishing and maintaining organization, determining the facts and defining objectives, and planning and carrying out action projects. (CK)

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DEVELOPING PROGRAMS for the RURAL HANDICAPPED

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foreword

In rural America there are many handicapped citizens capable of useful work and a normal life. Their situation can be much improved through cooperative effort among the agencies working on programs to help them.

The Rural Areas Committee of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped is spearheading this effort, in cooperation with Federal agencies which work with State and local agencies and organizations, public and private. Many agencies are working together to help develop program organization locally with the people, locate the handicapped in the country and small towns, identify their needs, arrange for rehabilitation and training, and locate jobs to fit their skills.

Here are some suggestions to help members of State and local organizations in developing programs for aiding the handicapped.

DEVELOPING PROGRAMS for the RURAL HANDICAPPED

E. J. Niederfrank, Rural Sociologist, Extension Service

The Challenge

Handicapped persons in rural areas face many problems, often obstacles of long standing. Many live more or less in isolation, without ready access to encouragement and helpful services for rehabilitation and employment.

Often they lack the money, motivation or ability to contact sources of help.

Transportation is a problem, often possible only through the kindness of friends or relatives.

They may live in substandard housing and have only a little money for the necessities of life. Even if they were rehabilitated and trained for work, all too often there are no local jobs for them.

But probably the greatest hurdle that handicapped people in rural areas must face is community apathy, and even willing people do not know what to do to help. Citizens often lack information about rehabilitation, employment and other services available to handicapped persons. But the tradition of mutual aid is strong in rural areas. Much more could be done if latent interest and leadership could be sparked into action.

Perhaps your agency or organization can provide that spark. Showing concern and promoting projects to help the handicapped person help himself will lift his morale and encourage him to work toward rehabilitation, better employment, more income and advancement. Such psychological motivation is very important to his progress.

Cooperative Effort Can Meet the Challenge

No single agency can provide all the motivation, information and services to solve all the problems of rural people who are handicapped. But the combined effort of agencies and organizations, public and private—each with its own unique contribution—can do the job.

Recent studies are encouraging. They show that rehabilitation in rural areas has been emphasized more in recent years than ever before because of citizen involvement. The service now reaching the rural disabled is frequently of better quality, more personalized, and involves more local resources, than that in many major population centers. It is important to continue such progress, reaching into neighborhoods where handicapped people are not yet being served.

State Governor's Committees on Employment of the Handicapped are being encouraged to name rural committees to lead special efforts for the handicapped in rural areas. Mayors' committees on employment of the handicapped are also at work in many cities, and these are urged to give attention to the handicapped situation in their surrounding rural areas.

The important thing is that it be a community's program, not an agency program only.

Usually in any community there are several organizations that would like to help. For example, the chambers of commerce, Jaycee's, the fraternal orders, farm organizations, women's groups, church groups; also the rural development committees, and the homemakers' councils and 4-H clubs related to the Extension Service.

Some of these groups already have projects to serve the handicapped. The State organizations of such groups may lead statewide programs which local units can pick up.

The key public resource in every State is the State vocational rehabilitation agency. Find out where this is in your State and call on it first to help you plan. See page 11. Universities also have resources and projects for serving the handicapped. Vocational education helpful to handicapped people is provided in more than 10,000 high schools serving rural areas, and in more than a thousand post-high school vocational centers or community colleges.

Developing State and Local Teamwork.

But somebody must lead in organizing and acting to locate handicapped persons, determine their needs, and contact resources to assist them. This function is important.

The **State** level function of a Rural Committee is to promote and assist in forming linkages among local groups throughout the State and assist them in developing cooperative efforts. The **county or local** chairman or group would take the initiative in starting programs among the people locally to identify the handicapped in rural

areas, refer them to proper agencies, and help them improve their situation.

Through this bi-level system much can be accomplished. Hopefully, every handicapped person in every town and up every country road would be located and guided to helping himself toward greater employment and living satisfactions.

Public agencies offer resources for rehabilitation, family assistance, and training; important personal aid and encouragement and job opportunities are contributed by local private organizations. State and local committees provide an essential mechanism for these groups to work together.

State Level Organization and Action

The first step in each State should be for the Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped to form a State Rural Areas Committee on the Handicapped. Another procedure would be to ask some group such as the State Jaycee's, the State Extension Homemakers Council, or a State farm or agri-business organization, to serve as the sponsoring organization for a program for the rural handicapped. It could set up a subgroup with wide representation to provide leadership.

Since most States have a USDA State Council of Agricultural Agencies and a State Committee on Rural Development, these groups would be a logical basis on which to develop organizational strategy for program activities. Both of these groups work closely with the State Cooperative Extension Service of the respective land-grant universities.

Through these groups, a committee or subcommittee to work specifically on behalf of the handicapped in rural areas would be appointed and activated.

The State group working with the handicapped should consist of people representing a broad spectrum of the life of the State outside the large cities—persons who are recognized as leaders.

A few States already have taken this first step. Designating an organization or agency to give administrative leadership to the program is important. Responsibility, in this way, is pinpointed.

Next, this State group should select officers and map a plan. This plan would include goals, and projects for determining the rural handicapped situation in the State.

The function of the State group is to promote local organization sponsorship and to help local leadership get started. It is suggested that this be done on a pilot basis, starting in only three or four places at first. Selecting these places will depend upon the State committee's judgement. Work in other places can be launched after the first local programs get under way, and can be based on lessons learned in the first ones.

The State group would relate to the activities of the overall Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, encouraging involvement of rural areas in its projects. This State program, in addition to organizing and servicing the local leadership, might include participation in Employment

of the Handicapped Week, fair exhibits, research surveys, participation in State publicity, and contacts with farm and nonfarm employer groups.

Local Organization and Action

The first step is to designate a local organization, sponsoring group, or committee, to give administrative leadership to developing work with the handicapped locally, including farm and nonfarm rural residents in the countryside and in small towns.

However, don't merely try to set up another committee in places where leaders are already overworked in many organizations and committees. Rather, as mentioned above, work on behalf of the handicapped might well be suggested to the county or area Rural Development Committee which operates closely in cooperation with the county extension services and other local agencies. It, in turn, could name its own subgroup to provide the specific leadership and action among local organizations and communities for work on behalf of the handicapped locally.

In one State, the Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped consists of a person from each county, and these persons serve as local chairman in organizations within their respective counties.

The function of the local committees is to determine what the situation is, what can be done about it, and then get people to do it.

The local program would include surveys to locate rural people who are handicapped, determine the types and extent of handicapping conditions, and the kinds of assistance needed. The committee would particularly provide information about professional and financial assistance available and help the handicapped take advantage of it, through the advice of a professional person from the assisting agency.

The local sponsoring group should study action projects to meet specific needs, primarily through involvement of local organizations, agencies and business firms.

It is important to have at least one or two handicapped persons on both State and local committees. Also be sure to check with your Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, for in many places it already has programs going on and may have a citizen's advisory committee which should be included in any new overall rural areas group launching a program.

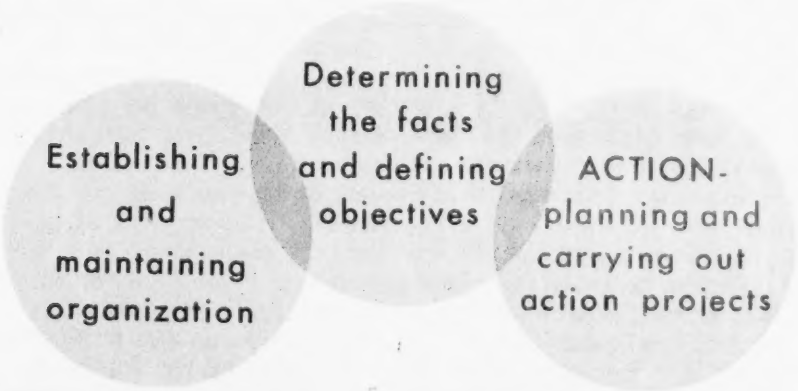
Discuss the need for serving the rural handicapped with the State interagency group you decide to start with. Mention the possibilities for rehabilitation and fuller employment. Emphasize that such improvement is important both for the sake of the handicapped and to fill the need for more skilled labor.

Personal help to the handicapped is only half the story. Just as important is increasing the number of jobs for them in the local area. This is a part of the total economic development. Besides bringing higher family incomes, it also improves the public welfare situation and reduces tax burdens. Ex-

plain the desirability of designating a chairman or committee to work on this, within the framework of the Governor's Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped and within the framework of rural development.

In some cases it may be desirable to develop a multicounty or area approach instead of a strictly county or town program. A single, standard pattern for all parts of the State is not necessary. Different local organizational structures can be established in different parts of the State to fit differing conditions.

To sum it up, work with the handicapped in rural areas is a threefold, interrelated responsibility, as shown in the following sketch:


Establishing and maintaining organization
Determining the facts and defining objectives
ACTION- planning and carrying out action projects

What You Can Do

The possibilities for helping handicapped people in rural areas help themselves are almost unlimited. Start small and let the program grow. This is much better than starting with a big splash, then letting the program fade.

Here are some things you can do, as a professional worker or group member.

1. Take a census of handicapped people in the area, and make sure you get them al', including those with only a minor problem. Get the facts on each case. What is the handicap? What is needed to overcome it? Set up a file for each one, and keep it up to date.

2. Work with each handicapped person in terms of his individual needs. Some may be minor, others serious. Some will have several problems including financing rehabilitation, transportation, and probably a medical or health problem. Each person will have certain skills, aptitudes, and interests.

Help each case contact sources of aid. It is very important to work only with the advice of the official vocational rehabilitation agency, as its staff has the professional know-how about what can be done, and how to proceed.

This total approach is more sound than for various organiza-

tions to decide individually to give help to someone as a charitable service, without reference to his overall situation and what other groups are doing.

3. List places with jobs open to handicapped people. Canvass employers in agriculture, business and industry. At first there may seem to be only a few opportunities, but these can add up. Work with State and local farm labor committees on this subject, also with the Employment Service and Vocational Education.

4. Help individuals get jobs. Some will need special training and encouragement to stay on the job. Work with the State Farm Labor Committee and Vocational Education on this subject, also with counselors of the Employment Service and Vocational Rehabilitation. Employers may need some extra explanations too. Local chairmen or committees should not be involved in actual placement, but they can help locate jobs and promote employment of the handicapped. It is important to promote the general economic development of areas as well, for the stronger the economic base, the more opportunities there will be.

5. Launch a campaign to educate the public through radio, TV, newspapers and talks before groups. A county youth group or other organization might lead such a project. Continued public awareness of the problem and what is going on is important. This develops a community spirit favoring the advancement of all people with handicaps and disadvantages.

6. Work with the rehabilitation agency or institution to help those who have been rehabilitated return successfully to their families and communities.

7. Have ramps built, doors widened, and other architectural barriers removed to help disabled and aged people enter public buildings more easily. See that such plans are included for new buildings and remodeling. Your local vocational rehabilitation counselor can secure standards for such construction.

8. Help encourage the handicapped to participate in local fairs, seasonal festivities, recreation programs, camps, and the like.

9. Develop adult education and suitable craft and activity programs for the handicapped. Here again such help should be based on the suggestions of professional people who have know-how about handicapping problems and services. Check with staff people of rehabilitation, education and employment agencies.

10. Develop a transportation service to help handicapped people get to and from community activities.

11. Involve the handicapped in community projects.

12. Encourage participation in State or local "Ability Counts" contests, which are sponsored by State governor's committees in most States. Sponsor a writing or speaking contest on "Handicapped People—A Community Asset."

13. Develop a demonstration or exhibit on rehabilitation and employment of the handicapped for use at meetings, fairs, and other gatherings.

14. Promote safety and accident

prevention to reduce the number of people being handicapped. This means working with your safety councils. Find out about these in your State.

15. Develop emergency services to get stricken people to medical attention before it is too late.

16. Encourage employers to provide special training for particular handicapped persons. Sometimes this is the road to getting important jobs filled, too.

17. Emphasize jobs and successful employment in contrast to a dole.

18. Contact the public library; they will be very glad to set up a special reading service for the handicapped, and provide special information for working on the subject. A library reading project is very helpful to persons handicapped by blindness. Phonograph records, tape recordings, and the bookmobile are important to library outreach.

Handicapped persons unable to read printed material are eligible for "talking books." This is a service operated by the Library of Congress through 43 Regional Libraries for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Find out what the eligibility requirements are and where to get the service in your State; then refer those eligible so that they can widen their horizons and gain enjoyment through reading.

If your State has a separate vocational rehabilitation agency for the blind, you should get in touch with it. If not, the general vocational rehabilitation agency will know sources for special aids and programs for the blind and visually handicapped.

19. Encourage organizations to participate in some way in the advancement of the handicapped as part of their programs. But aim to keep the work with the handicapped unified to avoid duplication from too many organizations working on the same projects in the same area. Divide up the program so that different groups can take on projects best suited to them.

20. Make sure that local leaders sanction your program. Make plans for giving community recognition of progress, both to individual handicapped persons and to organizations or persons who have made significant contributions, including employment.

Volunteers

Probably the most important parts of the program will be the interviewing, counseling, rehabilitation and training of handicapped persons to determine their aptitudes and prepare them for a productive future. Vocational Rehabilitation and education people must be relied on for this, but volunteers can also be helpful. There are many things a volunteer can do—identify handicapped persons, get them to interviews, provide encouragement, serve as interpreter, help them locate and adjust to new employment.

Do not hesitate to call upon retired people as volunteers or as paid part time specialists—teachers, repairmen, carpenters, and the like. Medical associations and their auxiliaries, hospitals, nurses, and persons in school systems may be

able to help. Handicapped people themselves, especially after some rehabilitation and re-employment, are often eager to volunteer to assist with programs in behalf of other handicapped people. Young people find this an interesting area for service. They want to serve in significant projects, and they should be included in the planning.

Major Professional Resources to Call on for Help

finding facilities and resources for counseling, rehabilitation and training may pose a local problem, but ingenuity can find ways to solve it.

The following agencies, found in all States and in most counties or areas, have personnel, resources and services in specialized fields to help the handicapped:

The State and County Extension Services of the State Land-Grant Universities. Extension agents are a source of helpful information and leadership for programs designed for rural people and communities, and can also help you contact other agencies for assistance. Through the Extension Service you also can relate to the State and county extension homemaker councils. These are private groups involved in educational and action programs, including health, safety, and services for the handicapped.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Serice provides counseling and financial assistance for medical diagnosis and restoration, and rehabilitative and vocational training suited to each case. It explores individual aptitudes, abilities and interests, helps expand the physical abilities of trainees. This State agency has offices which can be reached through your State Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped or through your school system or Employment Service. (See page11.)

Employment Security offices, State and local, provide training, counseling and job placement to individuals. The staff is familiar with manpower conditions and employment regulations and they generally have a selective placement specialist on the staff to assist persons with disabilities.

The Vocational Agriculture and Vocational Home Economics departments of the public school system can help provide education for rehabilitation and employment of the handicapped. The Future Farmer and Future Homemaker organizations are connected with these vocational educational programs. Investigate whether there are other vocational education programs or schools that provide special training for people with handicaps. Community colleges usually have information helpful to handicapped people.

State Departments of Vocational Education. In most States this department has one or more professionals assigned to programs for the handicapped. They help provide vocational training to persons with special needs, usually in cooperation with local schools and community colleges.

Farmers Home Administration can provide credit for rural housing,

community water systems, and for acquiring and operating farms. Credit is a much needed service for handicapped persons interested in agriculture or a local business.

Other local agricultural agencies should be involved in any program for the handicapped related to agriculture. Besides Extension Service and Farmers Home Administration, these may include the Soil Conservation Service, Forest Service, and the Farm Credit Administration.

Community Action Programs connected with OEO for work with low-income families may be found in many areas. These provide a variety of programs, services and projects to combat poverty. Handicapped persons may find opportunities in some of these programs, or new projects might be developed to give them more opportunity for rehabilitation and employment.

State and county public health departments help in many ways, especially in counseling and performing certain health services.

Welfare departments, State and local, administer various social and financial aid programs which are available to the very seriously handicapped and the aged, and provide supportive services and counseling on many personal and family problems.

Others who can help. In most States there are many organizations that can assist committees on the handicapped in planning or specific assistance. These include State and local medical societies and their women's auxiliaries, the Society for Crippled Children and Adults, the Lighthouse for the Blind, the Easter Seal Society, Goodwill Industries, and local chapters of other private national health and welfare organizations. These and others can provide information, people to help, and sometimes financial aid. The Veterans Administration should be your first resource on assistance for disabled veterans or their dependents, or for disabled survivors of deceased veterans.

State Rehabilitation Agency Services

The State-Federal program of vocational rehabilitation, which began in 1920, now provides a wide range of rehabilitation services for handicapped people. These include:

1. Comprehensive evaluation of each case, including medical study and diagnosis, to determine rehabilitation possibilities and needs.
2. Medical, surgical and hospital care and related therapy, to remove or reduce the handicapping disability.
3. Artificial limbs and other prosthetic devices.
4. Counseling and guidance services to help handicapped persons and their families adjust to their problems.
5. Services in cooperation with vocational schools, industries, and in specialized or comprehensive rehabilitation centers.
6. Living maintenance and transportation of clients as needed dur-

ing rehabilitation and training.

7. Tools, equipment and licenses for work on a job or in establishing a business.

8. Initial stock and supplies, and management services and supervision, for small businesses and vending stands.

9. Reader services for the blind and interpreter services for the deaf.

10. Recruitment and training services to provide new careers for handicapped people in the fields of rehabilitation, health, welfare, and other service employment.

11. Construction or establishment of rehabilitation facilities.

12. Providing facilities and services which promise to contribute to groups of handicapped people, although not directly related to the rehabilitation plan of any one person.

13. Services to families of handicapped people when such services are essential to the rehabilitation of the handicapped person.

14. Other goods and services necessary to render a handicapped person employable.

15. Placement services, including followup assistance and guidance, to help handicapped persons maintain their employment.

The above services are furnished through offices of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency under the Federal financial support and direction provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Because of local, State and Federal interagency cooperative arrangements, the locations of these offices will be known to your local welfare officials, county Extension agents, school superintendents, or employment office personnel. They can help you contact the right officials.

For A Smoothly Running Program

Regardless of the type of organization you set up for work with handicapped people, some basic procedures will make for more successful operation.

1. Establish an organizational base to provide sponsorship, leadership and direction to the work. This leadership may be a chairman or a committee, depending upon the scope of your situation and potential program. If your sponsor-leadership base is a government agency, it should have a citizen advisory committee to relate the program to the people.

2. Committees should have wide representation of membership. Include persons who are or could become interested in the subject, also at least a couple of handicapped persons. Do not include the officials or professional staff of your sponsoring and cooperating public agencies; they can best make their contributions as resource persons in ex-officio membership.

Let the size of committees vary with the situation. They might range from 6 to 8 to 20 persons, and can be changed depending upon experience, availability of

certain people, etc. Remember that the committee is for wide involvement; it can subdivide for work on particular projects. Every committee should review its membership occasionally, and have a definite policy about tenure and re-selection.

3. Every committee should have a chairman and a secretary designated, preferably elected by the group. But it is perfectly proper for the sponsoring agency to temporarily head the citizen committee, or to appoint a temporary chairman and secretary to function until the citizen committee elects its officers.

4. Assign someone the responsibility of providing the "executive direction" of the program, preferably a professional person in one of the organizations sponsoring it. Or, this may be the person serving as chairman. Without someone to provide this executive function, in cooperation with committee officers, a citizen committee and its program frequently tend to lose viability. Both research studies and experience show that programs must have executive leadership dedicated to the cause and with the initiative to assume responsibility for positive action.

5. Operate in a businesslike manner. The committee should meet at least four or five times a year, perhaps more often during the first year or until programs are launched. Make at least one important decision at each meeting. Keep records.

6. Set up general purposes and goals for the program. Keep reviewing these to prevent getting off the beam. Revise them to meet new conditions or when you undertake work on additional types of problems or program activities.

7. Develop facts and keep informed about the rural handicapped situation in your area. Know what is going on. Help stimulate and correlate activities.

8. Design sound, realistic plans of action, based on the facts, and limited to what you really can do. Start with short term or easily achievable projects. Sometimes the first priority might be simply getting office space and transportation.

9. Plan every project well, indicating what is to be done and who is responsible for what. Remember that "anything well planned is already half completed."

10. Develop wholehearted communication and cooperation within the committee and among the people working on your State or local program. Involve each member in something specific. Keep everyone informed about activities and plans.

11. Draw on resources that may be able to help. See page 8 for a general list. In addition to these there may be people or organizations in your area who would especially like to be involved. Get organizations to include in their yearly programs some work on helping the handicapped.

State and local citizen committees on the handicapped should function primarily as planning groups and catalysts, not as action groups doing all the work themselves; they will involve professionals to do much of this. Some

projects can be delegated to particular organizations or agencies. Others can be handled by setting up subcommittees or chairmen to implement them in cooperation with other groups or agencies.

12. Continually evaluate results and revise programs accordingly. Call attention to accomplishments, even if small, to create motivation. Publicize achievements.

In summary, it is important in planning programs for the handicapped to relate to government programs of financial and technical assistance that may be already underway in your area. Determine if any such program exists, then contact and correlate with it.

The vocational rehabilitation agency in each State is now required to maintain a continuing statewide planning function, including the use of citizen advisory groups. This planning activity must be coordinated with other organizations, both public and private, so that the needs of the disabled may be most effectively met. While each State is free to develop its advisory groups according to its special needs, it will welcome the interest of rural groups in helping plan for all citizens.

Quotes From Pilot Projects for the Handicapped

"Start with first things first and take things in stride. Plan for easy, achievable projects at first, but keep the main objective in mind . . . to have every handicapped person spotted, know his situation, and get him to helpful assistance."

"Strive for a decent office and official program support—clean, comfortable office, enough room, convenient access for handicapped people. Officials must learn that we are not a sideline, basement program."

"Our problem is not so much one of employment as of preparing the handicapped for jobs, better employment. It's a matter of developing attitudes—of the handicapped people themselves and among the people of the community."

"As far as a committee on employment of the handicapped is concerned, we already have our hands full making arrangements for rehabilitation and jobs, but a committee would be a good thing on a county or multicounty basis, to help us clergymen and other volunteers who are doing the work locally on an informal basis. Some kind of organization for overall promotion and teamwork is essential."

"We have a County Mental Health Board, and its first goal was to arrange for the services of a mental health team from the university to be in our area on a periodic basis."

"Find the sheltered workshop serving your area and start working with it."

"You ask if there are any service clubs in town that are involved in projects for the handicapped—yes, maybe one or two. . .What we need here is leadership—somebody to keep reminding us—somebody to plan and carry out projects who

knows a little about the subject."

"Our State Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped holds four meetings a year, in different parts of the State. This helps promote interest both among employers and among organizations for finding handicapped persons and getting them enrolled in rehabilitation and educational services."

A one-woman employment office pulled out her file and said "Eight handicapped persons placed last month, seven the month before, none the third month back, six to nine in the months before that." (A dedicated person who has local helpers.)

In one place several people said, "I wish you could come back here next week. That's when the Vo-Rehab counselor will be in town. She spends one day a month here visiting the different agency offices, also the former handicapped clients and processing new ones. We need her two or three days a month, not just one. . .Maybe we could do more ourselves, if we asked her how the community might help."

"The extension homemakers' groups of this State are doing a great job in behalf of the handicapped; so are the women's auxiliaries of the medical societies."

"Local people here tend to look upon a handicapped person as somebody a little odd, to be treated differently. . .It's tough on the mentally retarded who come back from good treatment." Another said, "Even qualified persons are turned down. Here we have 225 handicapped people currently seeking employment through the employment office. They have goals but no way to reach them; still they haven't given up."

But why isn't there a local committee on the handicapped? "Well," said one local official, "around here we are committee'd to death. There is one for anything you can name. Another reason is apathy. We need stimulation for action."

Handicapped people can make useful contributions as respected, self-supporting members of the rural community.

Look into these possibilities in your area:

- Are there handicapped persons who could become self-employed on farms? In agriculture-related business? In other businesses?
- Could community projects be developed that people with certain types of disabilities could handle, such as recreational facilities, park areas, or beautification projects?
- Are some handicapped people able to work in craft shops or at home, if an outlet for their production could be found?

Could your area attract business or industry, with the help of economic development agencies? General economic growth is basic to the employment situation of any area.

The national Rural Areas Committee of the President's Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped strongly believes that work on behalf of the rural handicapped should be tied closely to overall rural development, and fit in with and supplement the activities of established government agencies providing services to the handicapped.

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